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ABSTRACT

Large numbers of black children are being inappropriately labeled as handicapped. One study in California has shown that as many as 75% of the minority students in public school programs for the educable mentally retarded were not, in fact, retarded. In many instances a student's behavior, rather than pure academic performance, was the primary basis for placement in a special education class. Culturally-based IQ examinations also result in placing a disproportionate number of minority students in these classes. Educational assessment should take cognizance of students' cultural background and experience and identify specific educational needs of the student, rather than focusing on inferred intellectual deficits. Assessors should also develop sensitivity to the environmental factors influencing the cognitive styles of minority children. The assessment of black students must be based on the same principles of objectivity that govern all psychological assessment. (WP)

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Assessing Black Children for Mainstream Placement

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Introduction

Mainstreaming, as commonly used, refers to the process whereby students who have been labeled handicapped and placed in special education classes are returned to the regular classroom for all or some part of the day. The term handicapped is an all-inclusive term referring to the full range of physical, mental and emotional conditions which impede one's academic functioning for which special attention and specialized educational programming is deemed necessary. Immediately two basic questions come to mind: Which handicapped students will be the first to mainstreamed? and, What are the most accurate and effective means of identifying these students? In the following discussion, I will address these questions as they relate to black children.

It is common knowledge that handicapping conditions are more prevalent among the poor, and that blacks (and other minorities) are overrepresented in the poverty and low-income brackets. While it would logically follow from these circumstances that the overrepresentation of black children in some categories of special education is justified, there are some facts concerning one particular category of special education where the logic breaks down. It is in the category of special education for educable mentally retarded (EMR), where the issue of assessment is particularly crucial.

There can be no doubt that black children, as do white children, manifest the full range of handicapping conditions that require special attention in educational situations. But the range and magnitude of problems associated with assessment of all handicapping conditions with special emphasis on black children are too extensive to include in one article. Recognizing that there are serious problems associated with the assessment of black students who have speech, vision, hearing problems, who are emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped or multiply handicapped, I have chosen to address what I believe to be an even greater problem, and that is the problem of black students in EMR programs. That is, the issues and problems surrounding the mis-labeling and the inappropriate placement of large numbers of black children in classes for the educable mentally retarded. In other words, I want to focus on the false negatives that are the outcome of the assessment process and procedures presently employed by the overwhelming majority of educational systems in this country.

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Black Parents' Concern

Before getting into a discussion of the problems associated with assessment for special placement, past and present, there are some serious reservations about mainstreaming that need airing. Rather than interpreting these reservations as expressions of pessimism, the reader would do well to recognize that they reflect a healthy skepticism shared by many black parents. First, the notion of returning black students with special needs (appropriately or inappropriately identified) to the regular classroom or the educa-

cational mainstream rests on the unsupported assumption that the mainstream is beneficial for black students generally. Millions of dollars have been spent, with only minimal results, in Compensatory Education programs, ESAA programs and the like, to diminish the gap between the academic performance of the so-called disadvantaged (black and other minority) students and the advantaged students. Other efforts have tried to attribute school failure to deficits inherent in the student. This issue will be discussed in more detail later in this article. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence that black students have not benefitted from the mainstream of educational programming to the same degree as their white counterparts.

A second reservation is, whether or not mainstreaming will become just another educational innovation that is doomed to failure because of lack of adequate preparation and commitment of educators at all levels to insure success. Self-contained special classes, individualized instructions, and Compensatory Education programs were innovations that offered potential for effectively meeting the needs of black children with special problems. But lack of commitment and lack of the necessary preparation of all educational personnel involved destined these programs to failure. To train a special education teacher and then place that specially trained teacher in an environment not adequately prepared to support and facilitate special programs, is a common practice that is in large part responsible for much of the failures of special education today. Thus, the real concern is, what assurance can educational institutions offer black parents that mainstreaming will be monitored closely enough to avoid the failures that other innovative approaches have suffered.

Assessment--Past and Present

In order to consider what is needed in the way of procedures to effectively assess black students for mainstream placement, we must first examine present assessment procedures and how appropriate they are in providing an accurate assessment of black students. As mentioned earlier, the biggest problem with existing assessment procedures is that a significantly large number of black students are mislabeled and inappropriately placed in EMR classes.

Accurate statistics of the ethnic composition of EMR classes throughout the country are not available. But from the data available, the pattern is clear and the problem undeniable. The statistics for the state of California are not atypical of the nation. In California, there are two to three times as many black students in EMR classes as would be expected, given an equal set of circumstances. Throughout the state blacks comprise 9% of the public classes has decreased markedly within a three-year period (1970-1973) from 54,541 to 35,142, the disproportionate representation of black students in these classes has decreased markedly within the last three years from 54,541 to 35,142, the disproportionate representation of black students in these classes has remained essentially the same. In 1970 it was 27%, in 1973 it was 25%.

In 1973, Dr. Jane Mercer reported the results of an extensive study conducted in California and concluded that as many as 75% of the black and chicano students in public school programs for the educable mentally retarded were not retarded. This is consistent with other data concerning the misclassification of black children in special educational placements. After re-evaluation of students in Washington

D.C. schools, it was determined that up to two-thirds of the students labelled mildly handicapped were in fact not intellectually handicapped (Kirp, 1973). Similarly, re-evaluation of students in Philadelphia schools revealed that 25% of the students were definitely misclassified and approximately 43% were questionable. The two-thirds proportion is consistent.

The misplacement of black children is not a new phenomenon. This situation has prevailed for some time, in spite of the fact that parents and educators (Johnson, 1969; Dunn 1968,) have repeatedly brought it to the attention of the educational institutions. Dunn (1968), raised this issue in a presidential address to the Council on Exceptional Children. He prefaced his address with, "...I have loyally supported and promoted special classes for the educable mentally retarded for most of the last twenty years but with growing dissatisfaction. In my view, much of our past and present practices are morally and educationally wrong." (p.5). Dunn's article is one of the most quoted articles in special educational literature. Yet the practices he referred to still persist. Dunn was referring to the large number of children from poverty and "low status ethnic groups" who were being labeled educable mentally retarded. He traced the practice back to the early days of the compulsory attendance laws. He pointed out that teachers (general educators) began the practice of transferring these "misfits" out of their classes and he stated,

> This practice continues to this day and unless counter-forces are set into motion now, it will probably become even more prevalent in the immediate future due in large measure to increased racial integration and militant teacher organizations. (p.5).

Dunn's predication has been borne out. The fact that such practices which are recognized as "morally and educationally wrong" were not halted when first brought to public awareness forms the basis for the distrust that black parents express. This breeds the skepticism that underlies the resistance to new programs, even those like mainstreaming that have real potential for meeting the needs of black children.

In spite of the tremendous amount of attention to this issue raised by parents and some educators, the dumping of hard-to-manage students whom the regular classroom teacher can no longer tolerate into EMR classes is still a common practice. Harris (1975) recently demonstrated that a student's behavior, rather than poor academic performance, was the primary basis for a teacher's selection of EMR placement as the appropriate remediation. Harris presented elementary schoolteachers in three California schools with a set of vignettes describing student behaviors. She paired the student's academic performance, at grade level or below grade level, with behavior, acceptable or unacceptable. Teachers were then asked to choose a remedial plan ranging from additional personal attention from the teacher to placement in an EMR class. The teachers overwhelmingly chose EMR placement for students exhibiting unacceptable behavior, regardless of the student's academic performance. Special Ed placement was not the remedial plan chosen for students with acceptable behavior but functioning below grade level.

Teachers cannot make referral for EMR placement solely on the basis of the student's unacceptable behavior. So educational codes establish guidelines and criteria to safeguard the rights of students for placement. A student must be functioning below grade level or must be presenting a learning problem in order to meet the criteria for special placement. In most

states, the student must also perform at a specified level of subnormality on one of any number of standardized tests of intelligence. This gives the process an air of objectivity and scientific respectability. Nevertheless, student behavior is still the key and the teacher's reaction to that behavior is what sets the process in motion. The process goes like this. Most teachers are unprepared to accept the active, aggressive behavior of black boys. The aggressive behavior of a black child is immediately interpreted as hostile. The teacher's expectation is that the student should be compliant, docile and responsive to authority. The student is expected to conform to a standard of behavior that the teacher is familiar with, the compliant child standard that was indicative of the teacher's upbringing. It is as though the teacher makes an unwritten contract with the student, "if you don't behave, I won't (or can't) teach you."

The next step in the process is that the teacher will make futile attempts to control the aggressive, active behavior, but abandon those efforts very quickly and conclude that the child is unmanageable. The child resists the teacher's efforts to control the behavior. More often than not, the behavior becomes more unmanageable. As the disruptive behavior increases, the amount of time and effort available to devote to attending to the instructions and acquiring academic skills decreases. In all likelihood the student prefers to avoid the academic work. Within a short period of time it becomes apparent that this unmanageable student is not functioning at grade level. This then can be interpreted, depending on the tolerance level of the teachers, as a learning problem and a justification for referral for special placement. The longer the time span involved, the greater the learning problem.

The next step in the process is that the child is evaluated by a school psychologist and/or other specialists who employ objective procedures to confirm the diagnosis of a learning problem. The psychologist administers a standardized individual test of intelligence which is not only heavily oriented toward academic learning but is also culturally biased against minorities (Albee, 1969). The process is completed when the data from the objective, scientific assessment of the student's intelligence yields an IQ which classifies that student as mentally retarded.

The description of the teacher-student interaction was oversimplified and the process telescoped for the sake of brevity, but it is this set of circumstances that leads to the disproportion of black (and other minority) students in special programs for the educable mentally retarded. And it is not coincidental that the typical student in an EMR class is an aggressive black (minority) male. Boys outnumber girls in EMR classes as much as four and five to one in some programs.

The Cultural Bias of IQ Tests

I do not believe that Dunn was referring to the use of intelligence tests as one of those practices that were "...morally and educationally wrong", but it is my belief that the use of these instruments as the major determinant in the placement of black children in EMR classes clearly falls in that realm. In most states the education code requires that a student must achieve a score on a standardized individual test of intelligence that places that student in the category of mental retardation (technically two standard deviations below the mean) before that student can be placed in an EMR class. Although that stipulation is still in the Ed-code in California,

a recent court injunction (Larry P. vs Riles NOC 71-2270 RFP) has temporarily halted that practice. The California Education Code, like many others, also requires that other data be gathered such as a medical history and a social history. But this information does not enter into the determination for eligibility for EMR placement in any meaningful way. If the data concerning social functioning were used appropriately, as Mercer (1973) suggests, the number of inappropriate placements of minority youngsters would be markedly reduced, if not eliminated. Mercer (1975) devised a procedure for integrating these data in the determination of true retardation based on the definition of mental retardation proposed by the American Association on Mental Deficiency (Heber, 1963). That definition states that a person is mentally retarded if his or her intellectual functioning and social functioning (social adaptability) is subnormal. Mercer developed a classification schema that differentiated the clinically or truly retarded from the quasi-retarded by employing both IQ data and adaptive behavior data (information about social functioning).

Mercer's Topology of Mental Retardation

	Intellectual Performance	Adaptive Behavior
Clinically Retarded	Subnormal	Subnormal
Quasi-Retarded	Subnormal	Normal
Behaviorally Maladjusted	Normal	Subnormal
Normal	Normal	Normal

In other words, if the information from the social history suggests that the student is functioning at the same level as his peers, then serious questions must be raised about the accuracy or validity of the results of the intellectual assessment.

Despite the vehement claims of special educators who deny that the IQ score is the major factor in determining eligibility for EMR placement, the fact remains that the IQ score is the most crucial determinant. Similar claims were made by the defendants in a class action suit, Larry P. vs Riles, filed by black parents to stop the use of culturally biased IQ tests which results in the inappropriate placement of black students in EMR classes in the state of California. However, after reading the precise wording of the California Education code, Judge Robert F. Peckham agreed that the IQ score was the most significant information on which eligibility for placement was determined. In his order, Judge Peckham stated,

> "Such evidence includes the statement in the recently enacted education code that a child will not be placed in an EMR class unless other evidence 'substantiates' the IQ test score, a statement which suggests that the IQ score is the primary standard." (p.11).

The use of standard tests of intelligence on black children is an example of how other professionals, in this case psychologists, have allowed practices that were morally and ethically wrong to continue. In 1969 the Executive Council of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, which included among its members nine past presidents of the American Psychological Association, issued a position statement that concluded,

> "We must also recognize the limitations of present-day intelligence tests. Largely developed and standardized on white middle-class children, these tests tend to be biased against black children to an unknown degree".
> (Albee, et al., 1969)

Yet the professional psychological community, the American Psychological Association, and the testing industry have made only pretentious gestures to alter this situation. Many psychologists agree with the view of spokesmen for the testing industry who maintain that the major problem associated with testing is that tests are misused. But the Association of Black Psychologists (Dent & Williams, 1973) and others, (Green, 1972; DeAvilla, 1973) have pointed out that the tests themselves can no longer be ignored as a source of cultural bias. Green (1972) concluded a report on the racial and ethnic bias in test construction by stating, "...it is no longer adequate for those who build tests to argue that bias is largely a matter of misuse..." (page 14). DeAvilla (1973), in a report to the Civil Rights Commission also stated this issue clearly.

> "The major thesis has been that test publishers and the users of standard IQ and summary or achievement tests have failed to consider the problems associated with testing the minority child. And since the results of these tests are used to determine the education and, by extension, the economical and social future of school-age children, it behooves publishers and the educational community to take a harder look at the structure and theory behind tests." (p.5).

A brief discussion of the theory and procedures employed in test construction will bring clarity to the claim that the standard tests of intelligence are culturally biased against minorities. One of the fundamental principles underlying psychological testing is that in order for the obtained scores to be valid certain assumptions must be met. It is necessary to list some of these basic assumptions because it will become apparent that when applying standardized IQ tests to black students these assumptions cannot be met.

1. The first assumption is that there is a commonality of experiences shared by all those who take the test. Stated differently, it is assumed that all people have the same set of experiences and these experiences are tapped by the questions on the test. This assumption ignores the reality that there are distinctly different arrays of cultural and social experiences that persons in each ethnic group in this country enjoy and/or are subjected to by virtue of their ethnicity. This assumption also ignores the fact that all children have not had equal, or even comparable, educational opportunities.

2. The second assumption is that all those who take the test have equal facility with the English language. They speak, read or understand the language to the same degree. In other words, it is assumed that a child whose parents have completed college will have the same facility with the English language and will have been exposed to the same quality and level of verbal communication as a child

whose parents have not completed an elementary school education.

3. A third assumption is that all children who take the test will understand the questions equally. In other words, it is assumed that all children will understand the word usage and the context of the question in exactly the same way without regard for differing experiences.

4. A fourth assumption is that all students share the same value system. In other words, there is no recognition that differences in cultural background and in the economic conditions of one's life will influence the value system imbued by one's family and one's culture.

This list of assumptions could be exhaustive, but it should be evident from just these four that the assumptions on which tests are constructed represent a definite source of bias when tests are applied to populations other than the populations on whom and for whom they were developed.

As we look further into the process of test construction, it will become evident that the cultural bias already described is compounded by several additional factors: the item selection process; the content of the items; and the responses considered acceptable to those items. The item selection process is one in which experts, whose orientation is unquestionably white middle-class, compose a large pool of individual items. These items are then tried out on representative samples of the population. The largest segment of that population will naturally represent the largest segment of the total society, the white middle-class. Consequently, the items selected for a complete test will be those items that are most influenced by the responses of this majority group. In his report on racial and ethnical bias in tests construction, Green (1972) pointed out that,

> "Just as the degree of minority representation in standardization samples can have only a small influence on norms, minority group present in the try-out samples dominated by some solid majority will not accomplish much." (p. 14).

In other words, the responses of the dominant white middle-class segment of the try-out samples determine which items are finally selected. Once the items are selected and compiled into a complete test, the group standards or "norms" are established by administrating the complete test to an even larger sample of subjects. This standardization population is again representative of the total population. Thus, the norms and the acceptable responses to specific items are determined by the largest segment of the population represented in the try-out samples and in the standardization population, that is, the white middle-class.

Examination of the content of items on IQ tests will clearly reveal the white middle-class experience of the try-out samples and the standardization population. Questions reflecting the cultural experiences of blacks, chicanos, and other minorities are seldom, if ever, among the items on standard IQ tests. To ask black children to provide specific answers to questions that describe situations they have had no opportunity to experience, or to confront them with a question that reflects a foreign set of values is to put these children at a definite disadvantage. Is it reasonable to ask a black child

reared in a ghetto, how would you find your way out of a forest? Should a child from a welfare family be expected to give the middle-class response to the question, why is it better to pay bills by check than with cash? Should children whose experiences do not conform to those of the dominant white middle-class be penalized for not responding in an acceptable, scoreable manner? Unfortunately for the black child who obtains a low score on an IQ test because his responses do not conform to white middle-class standards, it is assumed that the intellectual abilities of that black child are impaired. He is presumed to have a deficit in his intellectual endowment.

The Deficit Model

This theory of the intellectual deficits of black people or the 'deficit model' assumes that racial differences represent deficits in mental abilities. The deficit model emanates from the more classical medical model which emphasizes disease, pathology and organ dysfunction. The medical model was designed to relate a specific prescription or remedy to a specific disorder or dysfunction. In other words, if the diagnosis was accurate, there was an appropriate prescription available that would bring about a cure. But this model does not hold up in the area of human behavior because there are far more unaccounted-for variables that affect human behavior than the standard prescription can address. Consequently, the medical model has been challenged repeatedly as an effective approach to the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Likewise, the deficit model is clearly inappropriate as an explanation of the differences between racial groups in intellectual and educational functioning. It has been demonstrated that not all black people who perform poorly on an IQ test or on a test of academic achievement are intellectually impaired. Thinking that is built around the deficit model does not take into account the obvious inaccuracies that are the inevitable outcome of inappropriate application of assessment instruments. Data obtained in this fashion tend only to perpetuate such notions rather than provide scientific information as to the nature and origin of the differences. This approach tends to reinforce attitudes and practices that inhibit rather than facilitate scientific inquiry. It fosters the time-honored practice of blaming the victim instead of leaving open to inquiry an analysis of all the variables contributing to the obtained outcome.

This is similar to the practice in the field of education of focusing on the student when seeking solutions to educational problems, when in reality, the student is only one component in the educational equation. The other member of that equation is the educational institution. As a society we never associate student failure with institutional failure or system failure. We never associate student failure with teacher failure.

The Assessor as a Variable in Assessment

The use of so-called objective procedures in psychological assessment is intended to reduce the influence of factors from sources other than the individual being evaluated. But, as we have seen, the standard IQ tests which were considered objective assessment instruments, are themselves the source of much bias when applied in the assessment of minorities. We must give serious consideration to another possible source of bias in the evaluation equation, the assessor. Assessor bias is of particular importance when the cultural background of the person being assessed is different from that of the assessor.

In a recent article, Hilliard (1975) discusses in detail some of the less obvious problems inherent in assessor bias. Hilliard makes the point that investigators who attempt to study other cultures must come to recognize that it is only through intimate contact with people from other cultures that the observer is able to understand the complexities of that culture. He stated that the skilled observer who develops this intimate contact with people from many cultures has found, "...that high-level complex mental functioning is generic to the human race." (p.4). He also contends that many investigators often do not delve deeply enough into the culture they are observing to make informed assessments possible. Hilliard believes that, "preconceptions of observers who thought themselves to be expert assessors," and "superficiality in cross-cultural assessment" are sure guarantees that the truth will not be discovered. Hilliard's discussion is particularly relevant because it applies equally to the instruments used in assessing the mental abilities of minority students as it does to the orientation of the assessor.

Some Guidelines for an Assessment System

It should be evident from the preceding discussion that the philosophy, the procedures, and the techniques presently employed in the assessment of black children for educational placement do not provide the accurate information needed to develop the kind of instructional programs that will yield significant benefits for black students. Recognizing the shortcomings of existing assessment procedures, and the fact that no existing test or conceivable battery of existing psychological tests can provide the needed information, I suggest there are some essential elements that can serve as guidelines within which an effective system of assessment can be established for the educational placement of black children.

1. The assessment must provide accurate information about the student's present level and mode of functioning within the context of his cultural background and experience. In other words, this assessment must accomplish what existing standard IQ tests do not. The assessment must provide information about how the individual uses his cognitive skills to function within the cultural context of his experiential world. In other words, does the student function effectively within the social realities of the situation and conditions in which he lives? For example, a black child in a ghetto would be expected to know how to find his way home from some distant place in the city in which he lives, rather than be expected to know on what side of the tree the moss grew in order to find his way out of the forest.

2. Assessment must identify the specific educational needs of the individual student rather than focus on perceived or inferred intellectual deficits. This element is straightforward. The assessment procedures employed must be sensitive enough to identify the competency or skill level at which the student is functioning in each academic area. The assessment must be able to identify what is needed to help the student progress to the next level of skill mastery. This does not specifically refer to grade level, although it might. This does refer to the fact that, in order to reach a given level of academic proficiency, one must acquire a series of primary skills which must be integrated into one's

repertoire before one can move to the next level of skills and so on, until complete mastery of all the skills needed to perform an academic task is accomplished. This approach does demand that the skills required to function in each academic area must be broken down into finite steps leading to complete mastery of the skills required to function effectively in that area. For example, this may mean that reading skills may have to be broken down into units as small and as fundamental as the differentiation of basic forms and shapes. Such assessment procedures will enable one to determine at what level or step along the continuum of acquiring reading skills a given student's development has reached. The task of developing a graduated continuum of skills needed in the acquisition of skills in any given academic area is one for the curriculum specialist, not for a psychologist. The point is that psychologists are not the only ones needed in the assessment process.

3. The assessment must also focus on the assets and strengths which the student brings to the academic situation which can form the foundation on which new skills can be developed. The deficit model orientation of the assessor inhibits one's ability to perceive or accept the presence of particular strengths or assets that a black child has acquired. In her article, "Turning Disadvantages to Advantages," Mante (1966) expressed this point vividly.

> "I believe that if we are serious about trying to help the so-called disadvantaged child, we ought to take a good look at him and see what he is really like. One thing is certain, however. The culturally deprived child has had experiences. Thus, in my work with a group of culturally-deprived first-graders, I set out to capitalize on experiences. I found a six-year-old girl, for instance, who is an expert on fishing, the procedure, the art of, and the laws regarding; a boy who would be a natural for the 1980 Olympics swim team; and a boy who had never been to the zoo but who had made many advanced studies on ants, snails, dragonflies, and other tiny creatures. These children had exciting stories to tell and interesting things to bring to school for us to talk about, write about, and read about." (pp.622-3).

Dr. Mante described from a teacher's perspective what Hilliard (1975) referred to in his statement, "...complex mental functioning is generic to the human race." In the context of our discussion, this is another way of saying that accurate assessment of the black child's functioning can only occur in the absence of preconceptions about the limitations of that child's abilities.

4. The assessment must be an ongoing process and not a static, time-bound event. This aspect of the assessment model may at first appear overly ambitious and impractical, but its value will become apparent. One of the basic concepts underlying psychological testing is that of sampling behavior. The sampling that is done in most testing situations is usually done by one examiner, under one set of conditions, and over one brief span of time. Designing

assessment as an ongoing process will facilitate, if not necessitate, the participation of all those having contact with the student. This will, in fact, increase the number of assessors, but it will also increase the number of observations of the student's functioning. Assessment conducted on a regular basis throughout the entire year merely formalizes a practice that teachers engage in without conscious effort. Formalizing the sampling of behavior over time increases the accuracy of the observations. The observing of behavior in a natural setting is far more desirable than sampling under artificial test conditions. A key factor in this aspect of the assessment process will be the observational skills of assessors.

Implementation

From the preceding discussion, it should be apparent that the assessment of black students must be based on the same principles of objectivity that govern all psychological assessment. To avoid continued violation of those principles it will be necessary to eliminate the biases inherent in the assessment process. Elimination of the bias in assessment instruments can only be accomplished through the development of culturally relevant tests designed to tap the experiences and abilities of the population on whom they will be applied.

Elimination of assessor bias will require extensive re-training of personnel in the education profession. Successful implementation of any program of mainstreaming will, of necessity, require additional training for some personnel. Since it is apparent that accurate assessment of black students will require involvement of more than the regular classroom teacher and the psychologist and other ancillary personnel, including counselors, administrators, special education teachers, social workers and curriculum specialists, must also be retrained. The use of the term re-training was carefully chosen, although it seems ironic to use that term in reference to professionals who have already completed training, and in many instances been awarded advanced professional degrees. It is even more ironic to think that any school district that would seriously attempt to provide its staff with the necessary re-training being proposed would probably turn for assistance to teacher training institutions, the same institutions that trained the professionals who now require re-training.

The training necessary to prepare school personnel to accurately assess the educational needs of Black students should be designed to enable school personnel to gain understanding of how social forces and cultural factors influence the development of the Black child. This training would also be designed to develop methods that would assist school personnel to gain insight so as to prevent their value systems from influencing their perceptions of the abilities of the Black child.

The influence of African thought and philosophy on the development of value systems of Black Americans needs to be explored. There is much about the influence of Africanity on American Black social institutions, particularly the Black family, that has been distorted in the writings of white scholars, and which must be corrected in order to understand the roles and relationships within present-day Black family structure (Nobles, 1974).

Such a course must be accompanied by one that directs attention to *the contemporary social and psychological issues facing Black Americans.* Unless one is fully aware of the impact of oppression, racism and poverty on the attitudes of black people toward the social, governmental and educational institutions in this country, one cannot comprehend the reactions of Black people, nor can one understand the true nature of the relationships Black people have with these institutions. Of most import is the fact that one will not know what effect these attitudes have on the Black child.

It is tremendously important for school personnel to understand *the differences in cultural styles and modes of emotional expression.* The aggressive, assertive behavior of some black boys referred to earlier frequently poses a threat or a challenge to authority figures unfamiliar with concepts like, "sellin' woof tickets". Young black children learn and practice these skills at an early age.

The influence of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors on cognitive styles and learning styles of Black students are other topics that school personnel must address in order to increase their understanding of black students. There is an increasing body of knowledge that is beginning to shed light on the specific effects that cultural experiences and socio-economic conditions have on the development of cognitive and learning styles of all children. The way children perceive their environment has been found to influence how they think about, feel toward and interact with that environment. This has definite implications for educational programs (Vasquez, 1974).

The application of basic principles of learning theory in a classroom and the application of behavior management techniques in a classroom are two areas that cannot be omitted from the proposed curriculum. It has been the writer's personal experience as a consultant to general and special education teachers in numerous schools and as a school district administrator of pupil personnel services, that very few teachers and equally few school psychologists have a working knowledge of these principles. Yet, teachers have repeatedly identified behavior problems and problems in learning as the two most demanding and the most time-consuming aspects of their classrroom responsibilities.

Observational techniques for classroom teachers should be a requirement for any program. One of the most essential skills demanded of all classroom teachers, regardless of the ethnicity of the students in the room, is that of being proficient in observing behavior. As mentioned earlier, this skill is essential in the assessment process. Hilliard (1975, b) suggests that teachers or highly trained assessors develop skills in observational techniques as an alternative to standardized tests. There can be little doubt about the fact that classroom teachers make countless observations of students' behaviors in the routine of conducting their day-to-day activities, but teachers are seldom, if ever, trained in the art of systematic observation. A few specific examples will help to clarify the need for and application of training in observational techniques. First, it is necessary to recognize that behavior does not occur in a vacuum. For every behavioral act there is an antecedent and a consequence. In other words, something occurred immediately prior to the event being observed and something will follow that event. In a classroom situation the teacher is only conscious of observing the specific behavior and is seldom concerned about what precipitated that behavior. Since the teacher is frequently involved in the

collective reaction to the behavior, observation of the consequences that follow is seldom possible.

Another principle in systematic observation is to observe and/or describe the behavior in small, finite units rather than in global terms or units. What is usually described as aggressive or hostile behavior can be broken down into smaller units such as "hitting behavior" or "name calling behavior" etc. Still another principle is to avoid placing a value judgement or interpretation on the observed behavior. In the previous situation "hitting behavior" is not necessarily hostile, and likewise "loud talking" is not always boisterous or aggressive behavior.

It is the firm belief of this writer that teachers and other school personnel must gain a thorough understanding of the issues covered in the above listed topics if mainstreaming and assessment for mainstream placement is to have the slightest chance for yielding benefits for black students.

Summary

From the preceding discussion it should be apparent that the goal of any program for the assessment of Black students must be based on the same principles of objectivity that govern all psychological assessment. In this article we have attempted to point out how those principles have been violated in the past in the hope that this will lead to more appropriate and more affective procedures and programs. We have also offered specific suggestions as to what will be needed to accurately assess the intellectual functioning and the educational needs of black students.

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